

# OLD TOWN MUSEUM

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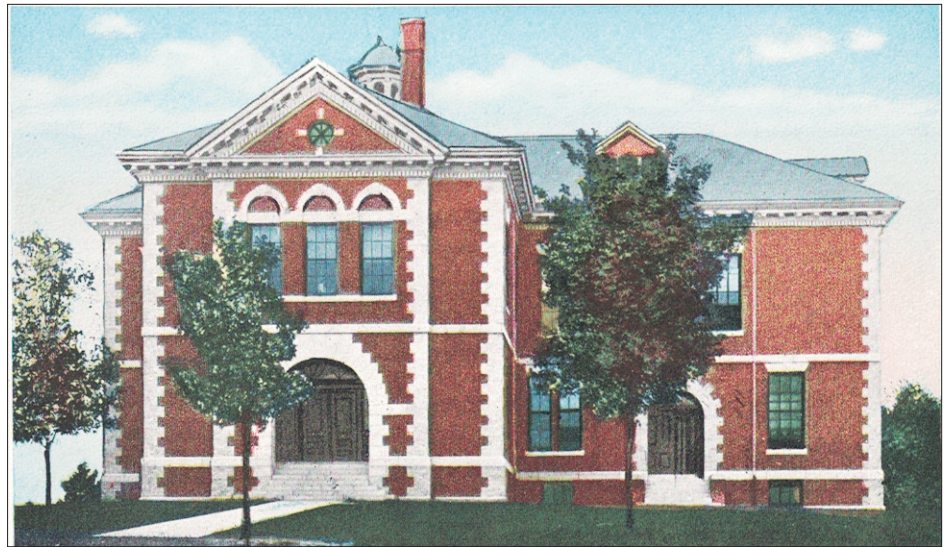
*Established 1976*

JANUARY 2023

*The Old Town Museum is a volunteer effort dedicated to preserving Old Town's history.*

## Reflections on the old High School

By Board Member  
Robert Stanley



There aren't a lot of us around now who remember the old high school.

My class, as seniors, entered the brand new High School on Stillwater Ave. in September of 1953. We were the first class to graduate from that building the following spring. As was the way of things in those days, our freshman year was at what was then called the Junior High School and is now the Helen Hunt Center on Brunswick Street.

Our sophomore and junior years were at the old High School. By that I mean the large brick building on Jefferson Street at the head of Oak Street. The building had, much earlier, replaced a wooden structure known as Old Town Academy. Hence the term Academy Hill. The brick structure is under renovation now but the exterior and grounds look pretty much the same as they did in the post World War II years.

In the early 50's the student population was generally around 400. With the exception of some who went to John Bapst, pretty much everyone from Old Town, Milford and Bradley went to O.T.H.S. From my 1954 Sachem I count 18 administrators and faculty. There were perhaps 15 automobiles in the small parking area on any given day. Compare that to the number of vehicles in the high school parking lot today.

I have talked with several other people from that era

and no one remembers school buses except for athletic events etc. Most students walked to school. Those from Stillwater and Great Works could use the commercial bus that then as now went from Bangor through Old Town and on to the Mill area in Great Works.

The school shut down for about an hour and twenty minutes so that students could walk home for lunch. Some went downtown to one of the several restaurants. The school did set aside a classroom to be used by the students who brought their lunch from home. All of this of course extended the school day to much later in the afternoon than it is today.

There were no athletic facilities at the school. The closest were at Victory Field and the gym at the Junior High School. The latter was also the site of graduations and any theatrical or musical productions.

The school offered academic, general and commercial programs the later of which was highly respected by employers in the area. There was no home economics facilities but there was a Future Homemakers of America Club that attracted a large number of young women as the Future Farmers of America had a large number of young men.

A unique feature of the building was the Senior home room, a large area on the second floor housed all the Se-

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niors. When the class arrived at the new high school, our only disappointment was that space was not provided for this source of senior unity.

The senior home room was presided over from a raised desk by Mr. Thomas Viola who held the now antiquated title of Submaster. Mr. Viola was a jack of all trades. He taught history, was active in the music program and was faculty manager of athletics, a forerunner of the position of Athletic Director. He also ran graduation week activities with a firm but fair hand.

The school that I have described may seem old fashioned today but the community and the world were different then. In the early fifties the Cold War was menacing and a hot war was raging in Korea. The draft was very real for young men emerging from high school. The national economy came out of World War II with strong growth. In Old Town, our economy was diverse and there were hundreds of jobs in manufacturing.

The downtown area was vibrant. On a Friday evening the many stores were all open until 9, the sidewalks were full of shoppers and it was difficult to find a parking space. On the other hand, there were lingering connections to the past. There was a sawdust bridge across the ice to Indian Island, until 1950, a two lane wooden covered bridge in Stillwater.

## Help us stay in touch with you!

email us at  
**oldtownmuseum@gmail.com**


Please email us with suggestions for articles you would like to see in our newsletter. We will attempt to get a newsletter out each month and will need article suggestions in order to do that; even better, please submit an article of your own which Bob Stanley has done this month.

Do you have memories you would like to share, If so please send them along and they will be included in an upcoming edition.

We have email addresses for a good number of our membership and will continue to email the newsletter out each month. If we do not have your email, you will probably not receive future newsletters since cost and time prohibits using USPS monthly.

So, take a quick minute and send us a note with your correct email address so that you continue to receive our monthly newsletters.

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E-mail: _____	<table border="1"><tr><td>Individual \$30</td><td>Senior \$20</td></tr><tr><td>Family \$50</td><td>Life \$400</td></tr><tr><td>Group or Business \$175</td><td>Donation: \$ _____</td></tr></table>	Individual \$30	Senior \$20	Family \$50	Life \$400	Group or Business \$175	Donation: \$ _____
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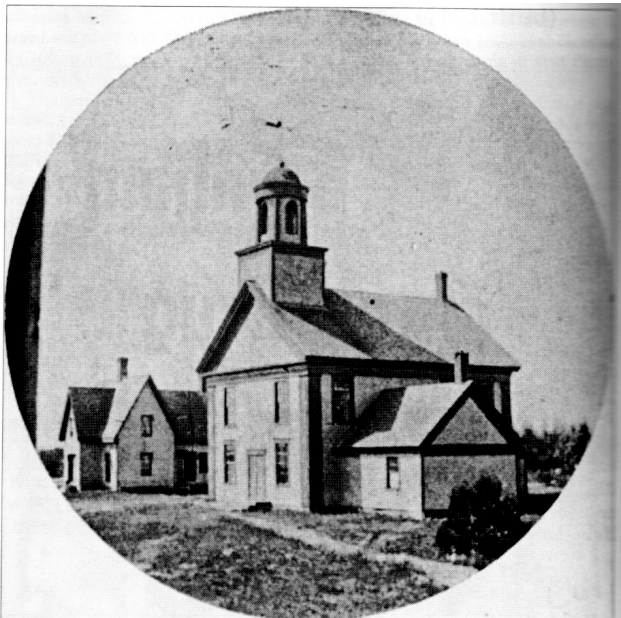


Excerpt from: Sketches of the Town of Old Town  
by David Norton, Esq, 1891

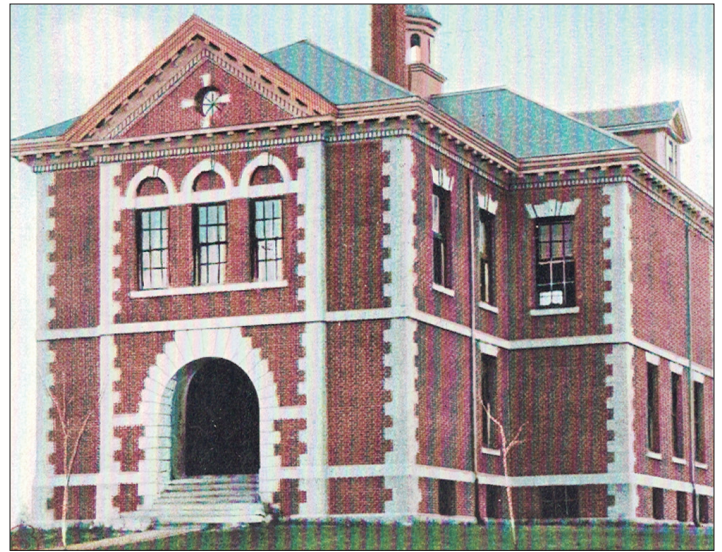
### **Union Academy**

In 1849, Samuel Pratt, Silas Stowe, Solomon Moulton, Samuel H. Merrill, Lorenzo Leadbetter, Rufus D. Folsom, E.B. Pierce, William H. Smith, and others, were incorporated under the name of Union Academy, Old Town, and erected the buildings as seen upon "Science Hill." The corporation received a grant of half a township of land from the State, which sold for four thousand dollars, as an endowment fund. The school was kept going about three years. Thomas Tash was the principal, and although a finished scholar and a successful teacher, was not able to keep the school up to a prosperous condition. Although the price of tuition was a now as at other academies, the price of board there was necessarily so much higher than in the country, that persons out of the town could not afford to come here, and the school was thus limited to students residing in the vicinity, who were not sufficiently numerous to sustain it. After Mr. Tash, Mr. Ludden kept a private school about two years, since which some of the building has been used by District No. 2, for an intermediate school. In 1873, the property was transferred to School District No. 2, by the trustees, under the free high school act.

### **Union Academy (built 1849)**



Union Academy was built in 1849 on Science Hill and served as a private school, an intermediate school and the high school until it burned in 1900. The next high school (Jefferson Street School) was built on the same spot and opened in the spring of 1901.



### **Jefferson Street School**

Union Academy served as an intermediate school for several years after it was transferred to School District No. 2. In 1886 it became a free high school, The Academy was lost to fire in 1900.

Jefferson Street School was constructed to replace the Academy in 1901 and served as the high school until 1953 when the new high school was built on Stillwater Ave. Jefferson Street School became an elementary school and remained as such until the new elementary school was built on Stillwater Avenue and opened in 2003.

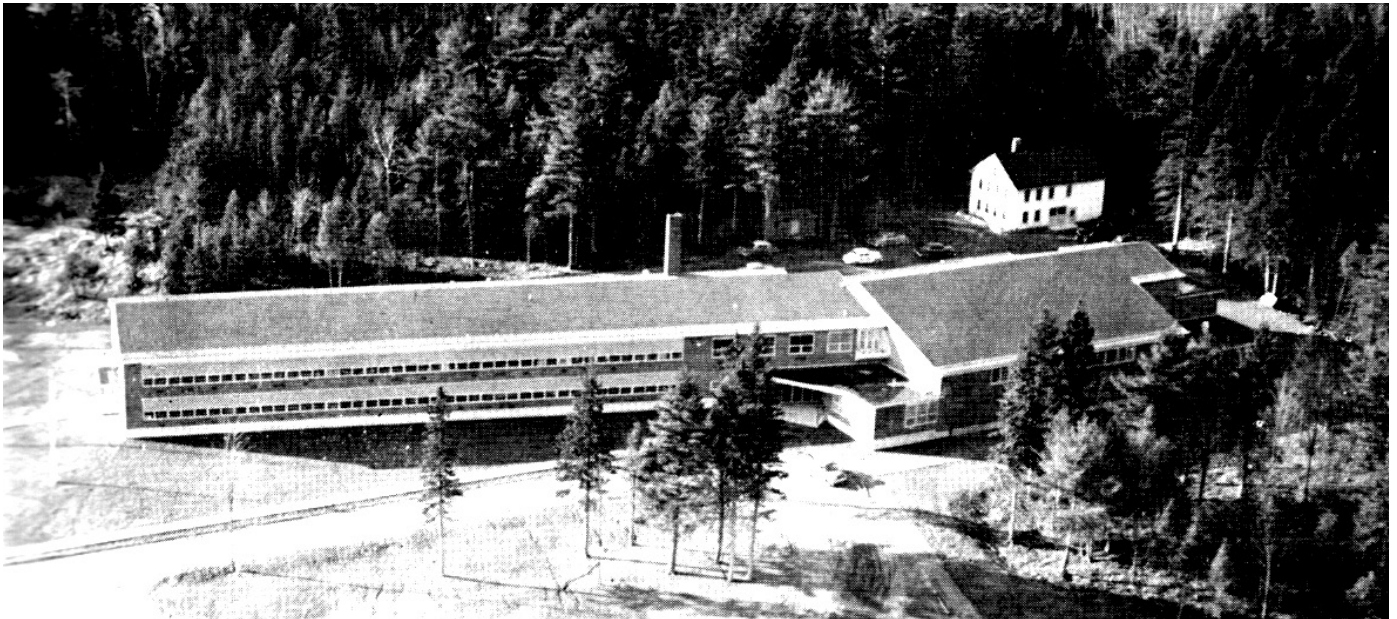
## **A Glance at the Past** *from Our Archives of The Penobscot Times*

**The Penobscot Times**  
**September 3, 1953**

### **Opening of High School Is Delayed; May Start Sept. 14 Other Old Town Schools To Open On September 9**

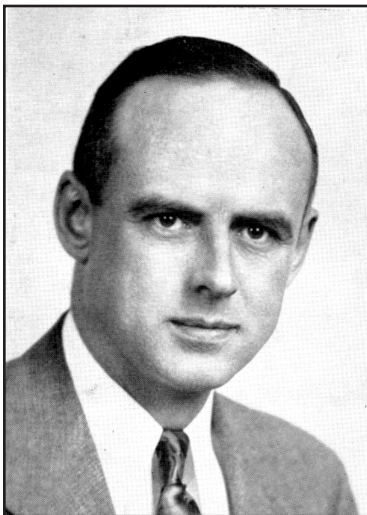
The new high will not be ready to open on September 9, as originally scheduled. Superintendent of Schools Joseph A. Leonard indicated today. Every effort is being made to have the school ready for opening a week later, said Mr. Leonard, and unless notice to the contrary is given, the high school will open on Monday, September 14.

The 1954 Sachem was a special dedication to



## The New High School Building

### SACHEM STAFF



Mr. Raymond Gove

### Dedication

We, the class of 1954, the members of the Sachem Staff and the underclassmen are proud to dedicate this, our Sachem, to Mr.

Raymond E. Gove, instructor of algebra and biology, coach of the cross country and track teams, and faculty advisor to the Biology Club and the Amps and Reel Club.

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